

Summary of Recommendations

Essex is at a turning point in its CBD revitalization program. It has successfully mounted streetscape and facade improvement programs, and, although there are additional improvements to be completed in the CBD, it

is appropriate now to extend these programs to an expanded action area. Essex has secured several significant public facilities as major activity centers in the downtown; yet those facilities have been only marginally successful in stimulating the business rejuvenation that was expected of them, perhaps because supporting private sector anchors for the downtown have not been secured. Finally, new initiatives have been seized in the form of the incubator that is planned for the downtown.

Clearly, a revised revitalization strategy in the CBD is called for, one that can build on past successes and recent initiatives. This report has laid the foundations for a revised strategy through a number of in-depth surveys and analyses of conditions and potentials (such as the market study presented as a Technical Appendix to the report). The findings of this research indicate that the Village of earlier revitalization planning is not likely to become a reality.

Instead, a multiple purpose function is suggested as the best role for the CBD, since opportunities and potentials can and will exist to support a mix of government, retail, office, service, cultural and educational/occupational activities. In this mix a balance should be sought, with each activity in support of but not dominating the others.

Central to the revised strategy is the opportunity to link the new incubator to commercial revitalization by establishing retail outlets for incubator businesses and career programs, including possibly food products and food services in a market setting. New public investment would come in the preparation of the incubator/market complex recommended for the large retail structure at 509 Eastern Avenue.

At the same time, current improvement programs in the CBD should not be slackened but expanded to include a broader area and to offer business development assistance as well as continued help in undertaking physical improvements. Such business development assistance should include the marketing of the CBD and of vacant space in the CBD, technical assistance to businesses, and financial assistance for working capital in addition to improvements to real property. With assistance from Baltimore County, EDCO is the proper body to rise to the challenge and to spearhead these expanded activities, just as it has lead the way in revitalization activities to date.

There should be no mistaking the thrust of this strategy: in no way should the incubator/market concept, even if highly successful, be expected to be able to draw back to the CBD the wide range of consumer durables stores, dry goods merchandisers, and specialty shops that it once had. Heavy traffic, changing markets, stiff competition, and an obsolete development pattern in the CBD have fairly well laid that possibility to rest. But as one among several action fronts in the CBD the incubator/market complex should bolster commercial activity in the CBD by effectively improving and utilizing a large empty space, by stimulating and guiding new business development, by creating a market for supporting goods and services, and by providing a new marketplace to attract visitors.

The overall effect of this project would be to help stabilize the CBD, to underwrite the investments that have been made to date, and to add confidence in support of continued expansions of the office and service sectors that are now underway. As cannot be emphasized too much, those other action fronts -- physical improvements and business development -- must be pursued vigorously in the future as key elements in a comprehensive revitalization program. By way of closing, the paragraphs to follow can serve as a summary checklist of the activities that should be on the revitalization agenda in Essex for the next several years.

Streetscape Improvements

Some streetscape improvements in the CBD are not yet fully complete, and there are additions that should be made at key spots or throughout the CBD. Concurrently, the streetscape program should be extended westward to the Back River bridge. Eligibility for the facade improvements program should be extended to this area, as well. Particulars include:

1. Continued and expanded activities in the CBD:
 - o intensification on Eastern Avenue to include more street furniture, directional signs, and informational kiosks
 - o extension of some improvements (e.g., lighting) partially down side streets (e.g., Taylor and Margaret avenues)
 - o complete improvements in the 500 block of Eastern Avenue east of Margaret Avenue
 - o address the unsightliness of parking lots: paving, striping, landscaping, lighting (especially the lot to the rear of 509 Eastern Avenue)
 - o institute stricter design controls under the facade improvements program (may require greater financial incentives; see below)
 - o consider rationalizing and simplifying zoning in Essex, employing different zones only where necessary to clearly achieve revitalization objectives.
2. Initiation of activities in the extended area:
 - o improvement of basic infrastructure that is in poor repair: cracked curbs, gutters, sidewalks, drains, etc.

- o streetscape improvements: less intense than in the CBD but at least planters, benches, and trash receptacles for appropriate priority locations
- o implement planned improvements and landscaping to the Essex Cube site at the western gateway; consider better landscaping and maintenance at the park and ride lot opposite
- o target particularly the many converted residences for facade improvements; enforce zoning regulations for parking or storing vehicles and other items

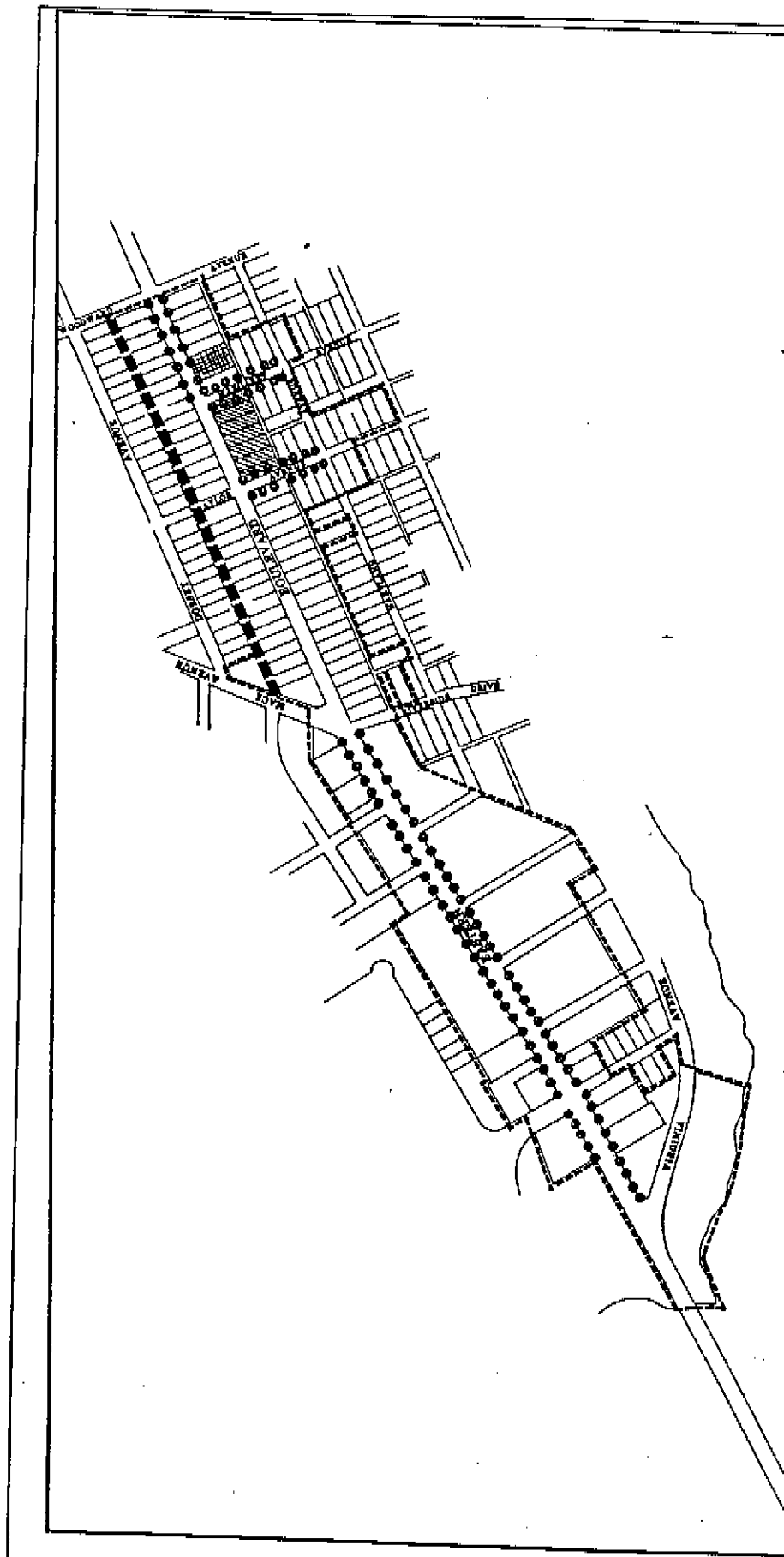
Opportunity Sites

Actions at specific sites are recommended to complement the more generalized streetscape improvements program. Recommendations vary considerably in scale and cover both the CBD and the extended revitalization area (see Map F for locations of opportunity sites and other treatment areas):

1. Target sites in the CBD:
 - o expand planning (and funding) for the incubator to include a marketplace linked to incubator businesses and career programs
 - o carry through on the funded park improvements planned for the Delia Motors site
 - o target for facade and other improvements the properties identified in the 400 block of Eastern Avenue as being in especially poor condition
 - o secure historic designation for Guttenberger's store, highlight role in Essex, and seek funds for restoration

2. Sites in the extended area:

- o Consider for targeting as rehabilitated multi-tenant retail complexes, the Mazer Brothers store group (122-140 Eastern Avenue) and the two-story building at the corner of Riverside (113 Eastern Avenue)
- o Work with the Amoco station on design and site usage in its addition of a convenience store (220 Eastern Avenue)
- o Target the Fruitland Produce Market as an eyesore that may have potential for a "period" or "maritime" facelift



ESSEX COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION

ESSEX, MARYLAND

Legend

- Alley Improvements
- Streetscape/Sidewalks
- Village Green Park
- Business Incubator Site



RPR

Effect of Critical Areas Legislation

The entire extended section of the Essex Revitalization District has been classified as an Intensely Developed Critical Area by the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPRM). All new development or redevelopment that occurs in this area must reduce pollutant loading by 10 percent of the on-site level prior to the new development or redevelopment. If the new development or redevelopment cannot produce the 10 percent reduction on-site, off-site improvements that achieve the same results in the watershed are allowed.

The fact that the 0-300 blocks of Eastern Avenue are in an Intensely Development Area means that any new development or redevelopment in the area should be brought to the attention of DEPRM in the early stages of planning in order for the developer to properly plan for the pollutant reductions necessary. In some cases the additional costs needed to achieve the pollution reduction may slow redevelopment activities in the extended area that may have otherwise occurred if no critical areas controls were applicable.

Parking and Traffic

There can be no relief to parking and traffic problems in Essex without the aggressive participation of Baltimore County. The County should not cease to intercede with the State Highway Department concerning traffic flow and control policy for Eastern Avenue; results may be a long time in coming but there is no other alternative. The County does have more say in parking matters; it also bears a certain responsibility for accommodating visitors to the multi-services center in a way that will not adversely impact the availability of parking for shoppers.

Baltimore County should encourage more turnover of on-street parking spaces and encourage better utilization of off-street long-term metered lots. Increasing the pricing of on-street meters to \$.20 per hour, while removing the meters at the Revenue Authority lot at 409 Eastern Avenue (the second Revenue Authority lot would remain metered at \$.10 per hour), would make the long-term lots more desirable for employees who are currently parking on Eastern Avenue and feeding the meters. EDCO should also work toward educating business owners as to the value of on-street parking spaces. Business owners would then be more likely to force employees to use the long-term metered lots.

The alleys between Eastern Avenue and Dorsey Avenue in the 400-500 blocks should be reconstructed in order to provide access to parking spaces behind businesses along Eastern Avenue. These spaces would be used primarily by employees, many of whom now take up valuable on-street meters.

Business Development

EDCO should take the lead in initiating a business development program for the expanded revitalization area. There should be increased technical and financial assistance from Baltimore County. Activities should include:

1. EDCO activities and roles:
 - o Carry out new County program for advertising and lease up of vacant space
 - o Design and implement a program for area promotion and marketing
 - o Implement a program of technical assistance for merchants and other businesses
 - o Pressure local banks and financial institutions to get involved in lending and investing in revitalization areas and projects

2. Roles and responsibilities for Baltimore County:

- o Extend loan and other financial assistance programs to working capital as well as improvements to real property
- o Provide staff and facilities for technical assistance programs managed by local development companies (chambers of commerce and other civic groups should participate, as well)
- o Make a special effort to support code enforcement and compliance with regulations in revitalization areas

Timetable For Action

Table 5 presents a summary listing of recommended actions for Phase II of the revitalization program for Essex. The table identifies the agents that should be responsible for project implementation, and a timetable for project completion.

Table 5. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE FOR PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS,
ESSEX REVITALIZATION DISTRICT

<u>Recommended Action</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Responsible Agent</u>
1. Acquisition and Establishment of Business Incubator (500 block Eastern Avenue).	FY'91	Baltimore County EDC
2. Streetscape Designs for Eastern Boulevard from Margaret to Woodward Avenue (500 block) and on Taylor and Margaret Avenue to Maryland Avenue.	FY'91	Baltimore County EDC/ EDCO/Property Owners
3. Acquisition and design of Essex Village Green Park at Delia Motors site (523 Eastern Blvd.)	FY'91	Baltimore County EDC/ Baltimore County Recreation and Parks
4. Reconstruction of alleys in the 400-500 blocks between Eastern and Dorsey.	FY'91,92	Baltimore County Public Works/Property Owners
5. Streetscape design for 0-300 blocks of Eastern Avenue.	FY'92	Baltimore County EDC/ EDCO/Property Owners
6. Streetscape construction for Eastern Avenue from Margaret to Woodward Avenue and on Taylor and Margaret Avenue to Maryland Avenue.	FY'92	Baltimore County EDC/ EDCO/Property Owners
7. Construction of Essex Village Green Park (523 Eastern Blvd.).	FY'92	Baltimore County EDC/ Baltimore County Recreation and Parks
8. Streetscape construction for 0-300 blocks Eastern Avenue.	FY'93	Baltimore County EDC/ EDCO/Property Owners

Source: RPR Economic Consultants and EDCO.



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